

Claims:

- 1        1.     A moisture-absorbing material comprising a natural  
2        cellulosic material defined by hollow fibrous tubes that have  
3        been sequentially (i) dried, (ii) combed in a direction to  
4        substantially longitudinally align said hollow fibrous tubes,  
5        (iii) stretched substantially in said direction, (iv) twisted  
6        substantially about said direction, and (v) compressed  
7        substantially in said direction, wherein a dried-in strain of  
8        said natural cellulosic material is greatest along said  
9        direction.
  
- 1        2.     A moisture-absorbing material as in claim 1 further  
2        comprising a powder material adhering to and residing within  
3        said hollow fibrous tubes, said powder material being inert  
4        with respect to said natural cellulosic material and  
5        initiating a chemical reaction when exposed to water, wherein  
6        a product of said chemical reaction is water.
  
- 1        3.     A moisture-absorbing material as in claim 1 wherein said  
2        natural cellulosic material is cotton.
  
- 1        4.     A moisture-absorbing material as in claim 2 wherein said  
2        powder material is selected from the group consisting of: a  
3        mixture of sodium bicarbonate and citric acid; and a mixture

4 of sodium bicarbonate and potassium hydrogen tartrate.

1 5. A moisture-absorbing material as in claim 2 wherein said  
2 powder material is selected such that another product of said  
3 chemical reaction is gaseous.

1        6. A moisture-absorbing material comprising:

2                hollow fibrous tubes of cotton that have been  
3 sequentially (i) dried, (ii) combed in a direction to  
4 substantially longitudinally align said hollow fibrous tubes  
5 of cotton, (iii) stretched in said direction, (iv) twisted  
6 about said direction, and (v) compressed in said direction,  
7 wherein a dried-in strain of said hollow fibrous tubes of  
8 cotton is greatest along said direction; and

9                a powder material adhering to and residing within said  
10 hollow fibrous tubes of cotton, said powder material being  
11 inert with respect to said hollow fibrous tubes of cotton and  
12 initiating a chemical reaction when exposed to water, wherein  
13 a product of said chemical reaction is water.

1        7. A moisture-absorbing material as in claim 6 wherein said  
2 powder material is selected from the group consisting of: a  
3 mixture of sodium bicarbonate and citric acid; and a mixture  
4 of sodium bicarbonate and potassium hydrogen tartrate.

1        8. A moisture-absorbing material as in claim 6 wherein said  
2 powder material is selected such that another product of said  
3 chemical reaction is gaseous.

1        9.     A method of making a moisture-absorbing material  
2        comprising the steps of:

3                providing a natural cellulosic material that is defined  
4        by hollow fibrous tubes;

5                drying said natural cellulosic material;

6                combing, after said step of drying, said natural  
7        cellulosic material in a direction to substantially  
8        longitudinally align said hollow fibrous tubes;

9                stretching, after said step of combing, said hollow  
10       fibrous tubes substantially in said direction;

11               twisting, after said step of stretching is commenced,  
12       said hollow fibrous tubes substantially about said direction;  
13       and

14               compressing, after said step of twisting, said hollow  
15       fibrous tubes in said direction, wherein a dried-in strain of  
16       said natural cellulosic material is greatest along said  
17       direction.

1        10.    A method according to claim 9 further comprising the  
2        step of mixing a powder material with said hollow fibrous  
3        tubes wherein said powder material adheres to and resides in  
4        said hollow fibrous tubes, said powder material being inert  
5        with respect to said natural cellulosic material and  
6        initiating a chemical reaction when exposed to water, wherein  
7        a product of said chemical reaction is water.

1        11.    A method according to claim 9 wherein said natural  
2        cellulosic material is cotton.

1        12.    A method according to claim 10 wherein said powder  
2        material is selected from the group consisting of: a mixture  
3        of sodium bicarbonate and citric acid; and a mixture of  
4        sodium bicarbonate and potassium hydrogen tartrate.

1        13.    A method according to claim 9 wherein said powder  
2        material is selected such that another product of said  
3        chemical reaction is gaseous.

1        14.     A method of making a moisture-absorbing material  
2        comprising the steps of:

3                providing cotton in the form of hollow fibrous tubes  
4        thereof;

5                drying said cotton;

6                mixing, during said step of drying, a powder material  
7        with said hollow fibrous tubes wherein said powder material  
8        adheres to and resides in said hollow fibrous tubes, said  
9        powder material being inert with respect to said natural  
10       cellulosic material and initiating a chemical reaction when  
11       exposed to water, wherein a product of said chemical reaction  
12       is water;

13                combing, after said step of drying, said cotton in a  
14        direction to substantially longitudinally align said hollow  
15        fibrous tubes;

16                stretching, after said step of combing, said hollow  
17        fibrous tubes substantially in said direction;

18                twisting, at least after said step of stretching is  
19        commenced, said hollow fibrous tubes substantially about said  
20        direction; and

21                compressing, after said step of twisting, said hollow  
22        fibrous tubes in said direction, wherein a dried-in strain of  
23        said cotton is greatest along said direction.

15. A method according to claim 14 wherein said powder material is selected from the group consisting of: a mixture of sodium bicarbonate and citric acid; and a mixture of sodium bicarbonate and potassium hydrogen tartrate.

1 16. A method according to claim 14 wherein said powder  
2 material is selected such that another product of said  
3 chemical reaction is gaseous.